

Vermont Mental Health Performance Indicator Project

DDMHS, Weeks Building, 103 South Main Street, Waterbury, VT 05671-1601 (802-241-2638)

MEMORANDUM

TO: Vermont Mental Health Performance Indicator Project
Advisory Group and Interested Parties

FROM: John Pandiani and Monica Simon

DATE: November 8, 2002

RE: September 11 and Arrest Rates for Young Adults with SMI

A letter to the editor in the November, 2002 issue of *Psychiatric Services* 53(11):1475, addresses the potential that events such as those of September 11, 2001 may have a greater impact on adults with serious mental illness than on other adults. This letter cites Vermont PIP findings presented at the National Conference on Mental Health Statistics earlier this year (www.state.vt.us/dmh/Data/PIPs/2002/pip053102.pdf).

The letter to the editor observes that:

"Public discussions of the impact of the events of September 11, 2001 have focused almost entirely on the general population of the United States. These discussions include concerns of the impact of terror (past and anticipated) on the mental health of the population and concerns about the impact of government responses to terror. Little attention has been devoted to the impact of terror on people with serious mental illness."

Citing Vermont research, the letter reports that:

"Preliminary findings indicate that there was a substantial increase in the relative risk of arrest for young adults (18 – 34) receiving services for serious mental illness in Vermont after September 11. During the 24 months before September 11, service recipients were between 3 and 4 times as likely as other young adults to be arrested. During the weeks after September 11, service recipients were six times as likely to be arrested. This increased relative risk had declined somewhat by the end of March 2002, but still remained greater than pre-September 11 rates."

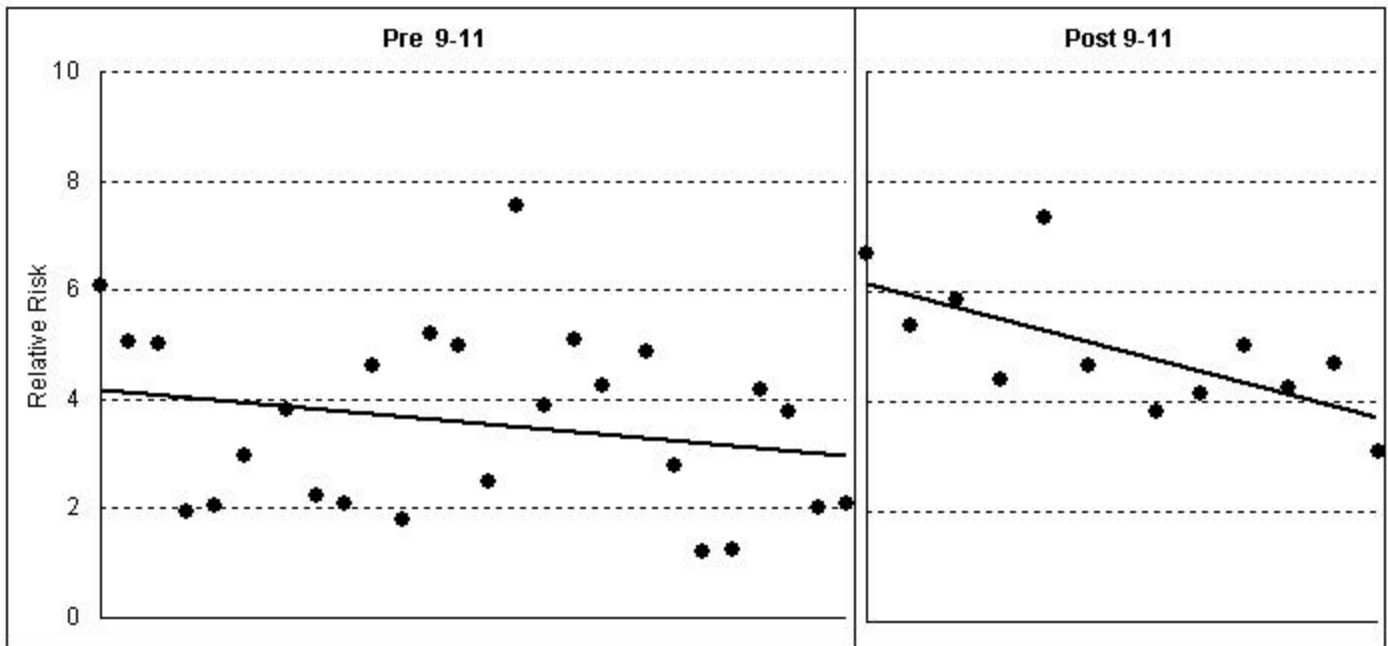
"The change in relative risk of arrest observed in our research could be attributed to increased expression of psychiatric symptoms by service recipients, increased law enforcement activity with regard to service recipients, or to some combination of the two. Research that attempts to disentangle the impact of these two forces will have important implications for program administrators and direct service providers."

And recommends that:

"...systematic research on the impacts of terrorism on people with mental illness needs to complement research on impacts on the general population."

This week's PIP provides updated results that extend the post-9/11 follow-up period from seven months to 12 months based on continuous monitoring of criminal justice involvement (and other important outcome measures) by the Vermont PIP. The current analysis indicates that rates of criminal justice involvement for young adults with serious mental illness have continued to decrease and, after a year, are approaching pre-9/11 levels.

**Relative Risk of Arrest
For Young Adults (18 - 34) with Serious Mental Illness in Vermont
Before and After the Events of September 11**



Pre 9-11 = July 1999 - August 2001

Post 9-11 = September 2001 - August 2002

We will appreciate hearing your observations, interpretations, and suggestions for further analysis regarding the relationship between large-scale social trauma and the life experience of adults with serious mental illness. As always, you can contact us at 802-241-2638 or pip@ddmhs.state.vt.us.